

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for determining the availability of an item requested by an on-line shopper,
comprising the steps of:
determining an approximate quantity of an item available for purchase by an on-line
shopper; and
adjusting the approximate quantity responsive to a quantity-held estimate of a number of
units of the item held by in-person shoppers prior to checkout by the in-person shoppers.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon an average
number of the item purchased historically during a specified period of time.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon a time of day.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon a day of a week.

1 5. The method of claim1, wherein the quantity-held estimate is dependent upon proximity to a
2 holiday.

1 6. A method for determining the availability of an item requested by an on-line shopper,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 identifying an item requested by an on-line shopper;

4 determining an approximate quantity of the item available for purchase by the on-line
5 shopper by reading an inventory record;

6 adjusting the approximate quantity responsive to a quantity-held estimate of a number of
7 units of the item held by in-person shoppers prior to check out by the in-person shoppers, to
8 provide an adjusted quantity;

9 comparing the adjusted quantity with a first threshold; and

10 when the adjusted quantity is less than the first threshold, invoking a corrective action.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the step of prompting the on-
2 line shopper to select an alternative item.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the steps of asking the on-line
2 shopper to submit an order for the item; and, if the on-line shopper submits the order, removing
3 the item from stock and revising the approximate quantity.

1 9. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the steps of monitoring the
2 approximate quantity when the adjusted quantity is less than the first threshold, and informing
3 the on-line shopper when the approximate quantity falls below a second threshold.

1 10. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of invoking includes the step of instructing an in-
2 house shopping assistant to reserve the item for the on-line shopper.